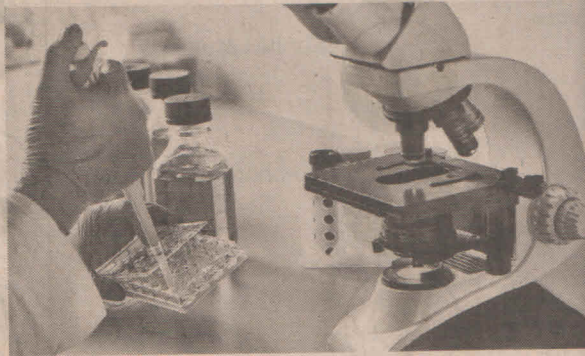


RIS takes lead to make Asian, African think tanks share best practices



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India this week allowed Pfizer a patent on its pneumonia vaccine despite opposition by more than one civil society group. But in April, the Delhi High Court had shot down an application from Bayer for extension of patent of a kidney and liver cancer drug, creating space for local companies to produce the medicine at a cost 90 per cent less than the original.

The two examples, with huge implications for health care for countries in the global "south", are likely to figure at a key meeting of think tanks from these nations. The meeting begins on Thursday in New Delhi. "These countries need to figure out what are the value-added happening in these key sectors and work out the nature of partnerships required and the related challenges," said Hardeep Puri, chairman of Delhi-based think tank RIS.

With the support of the Ministry of External Affairs, the institution is bringing together the largest coalition of think tanks at the 3rd International Conference on South-South and Triangular Development Cooperation. "The countries need to focus on issues beyond the so-called definitional debates. The think tanks need to share knowledge about these developments as their key take-aways than keep harping about

aid issues," added Puri.

The platform is different from the traditional view of relying only on government-to-government cooperation to help the people of the south, home to three-fourths of the world's population. The focus is not on managing "aid" but to gather information on how to manage their problems by learning from each other. And there are plenty of common topics for them to share; the floods that have hit large swathes of population in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are similar to the recent rain-led disaster at Sierra Leone. Banks in India and in Brazil are both battling a surge in bad loans. Credit rating agency Fitch has maintained a negative outlook for Brazil in 2017, just as it has for eight banks in India.

Think tanks of many smaller countries are often hemmed in without detailed information on the typical challenges that face their countries.

"Bringing together the think tanks provides a neutral platform to look at some of these issues before governments get in," said Rajat Nag, distinguished fellow at National Council of Applied Economic Research and former managing director at the Asian Development Bank. Nag will be chairing a session on the financial sector at the conference.

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